



## Consul General's Remarks to Discover America Seminars, February 26, 2008

Let me begin this evening with a thank you to all the folks at the Visit USA Organization, for their organizing of today's event and for inviting me to tonight's seminar. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge their hard work and efforts throughout the year to promote tourism to the United States.

I want to extend a warm and special welcome to all the U.S. exhibitors who have come down to Australia to participate in the Discover America Seminars.

And as the Consul General to Melbourne, I say a thank you to all of our local travel agents, for encouraging your clients to take the opportunity to experience all the wonder and excitement the United States holds for her visitors.

We realize that international tourism is a very competitive business and that the Australian traveler has a multitude of choice when it comes to deciding where they will spend their tourist dollar.

With more than 600,000 Australians visiting the United States each year, as an American, I am pleased that the United States is the most popular long-haul destination for Australian travelers. I know that the people Australians meet during their travels to the States will show them the same warm hospitality that my family and I have enjoyed here in Melbourne.

The strong Australian Dollar means that now is the time for your clients to take advantage of the favorable exchange rate. The United States has become a cheaper destination over the past few years, and your clients will immediately notice that their Australian Dollar is giving them greater value. With the announcement on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of January of the Open Skies agreement between the Australian and the

United States Government, the possibilities for even more accessible travel has grown again.

The United States offers many wonderful tourist destinations such as California, Nevada, Hawaii, New York, Seattle, and the Rocky Mountains region, and we look forward to welcoming many more Australian visitors to our country.

Let me again reiterate my thankfulness to you all for promoting tourism to the United States, and I will conclude by encouraging you all to tell your clients -- "Discover America!"